UCLA Faculty Association

News and opinion from Dan Mitchell since 2009

Friday, February 6, 2026

I never promised you a Rose Bowl? - Part 12

From Pasadena Now: *A Los Angeles County Superior Court judge has denied a request by the University of California Regents, on behalf of UCLA, to force arbitration in an ongoing lawsuit with the City and the Rose Bowl Operating Company over the Bruins' long-term stadium agreement. In a ruling issued on Tuesday, Judge Joseph Lipner rejected motions by UCLA to compel arbitration and stay the case, allowing the breach-of-contract lawsuit to proceed in court.*

"The court DENIES the motions to compel arbitration. The Court DENIES the motions to stay proceedings," according to the minute order. "UCLA also filed a motion to quash deposition subpoenas and enter a protective order. The Court DENIES UCLA's motion to quash." ...

Full story at https://pasadenanow.com/main/judge-rejects-ucla-bid-to-force-rose-bowl-dispute-into-arbitration.

It wasn't clear why UCLA thought it would get a better deal from an arbitrator than from a trial. Either way, breaking a long-term contract was going to cost big bucks. But whatever the thinking, it lost.

Note that this affair is occurring at a time when its athletics program is running in the red, and while the university is feeling budget pressures across the campus.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:10 AM No comments:

Labels: athletics, UCLA

Thursday, February 5, 2026

Epstein in Academialand

The Epstein files that have been released involve millions of items, and the US Dept. of Justice has a searchable database:

https://www.justice.gov/epstein

Put in a name and out will come references. I typed in "Smith" and over 10,000 documents popped up. Lots of the contacts - although some very peripheral - are academics. They are often at prominent institutions. Their names aren't for the most part well known in general,

The Council of UC Faculty Associations

- FAQs for Senate Faculty about Possible Strike by UAW; Winter 2026
- Fight for the Future of Higher Education: Academic Freedom from the Classroom to the Clinic
- Our Concerns Over Revisions to APMs 15 and 16
- Fight for the Future of Higher Ed Town Hall
- Letter from AAUP to UC Objecting to Trellix

Remaking the University

- Liner Note 48. The Faculty's Budget Fight at UCLA - 2/23/2026
- Liner Note 47. Did The Atlantic's Anti-Woke Bias Spoil its Analysis of Humanities Funding Death? - 2/16/2026
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- UC-AFT

Topics

but they are often significant figures in their fields. Student newspapers are having a field day searching for Epstein references to individuals at their schools. For that matter, so are professional journalists.

Remember the Steve Bannon idea of "flooding the zone," the concept that if you just keep throwing out stuff into the public arena, journalists and the general public will lose sight of what's important and what's not? So let's take a deep breath and recall what is - or was - supposed to be important.

Why was there pressure to release the files? Democrats assumed that there would be derogatory material on Trump, beyond what was already known. Republicans assumed there would be derogatory material on the Clintons. Conspiracy theorists within MAGA thought the files would expose who-knows-what: The identity of Q? The "deep state"? The fact that Epstein is an obviously Jewish name has only added to the conspiracy view in the current climate. (Nobody has made this self-evident point, so I will.)

Note that as more and more files have been dumped into public view, you don't hear much about Trump. Now, even if someone finds something more than has been in public view for some time about the Trump-Epstein connection, it will just seem to be one of thousands of such connections. The zone has been flooded. There is mud everywhere. In the confusion, what was assumed initially to be THE story has been lost in the confusion and muck.

What has emerged about Epstein is that he was very good at ingratiating himself with prominent people. And, like other con artists, he wasn't especially concerned with the truth, although he was obviously bright. He started teaching math (with falsified credentials) at a prestigious, high-end private school, got noticed by someone with connections in finance, and progressively exploited the resulting contacts in the world of finance to make himself wealthy. Part of his MO was to link up with academics and higher ed institutions, dangling the potential of research and other funding. Providing research funding gave him an aura of legitimacy in academia and beyond. Thus, his story includes prominent faculty, some of whom circled around him like bees to a flower. The New York Times has a lengthy piece on how Epstein made his money and developed his contacts if you want more detail.*

The problem is that we are moving into witch hunt territory, with individuals who were found in the file dump now apologizing, or saying they didn't know about the sex stuff, and, in any case, hoping they won't be canceled. You'll be *shocked, shocked* to know that there are academics who are attracted to money, who like to be flattered, and who even say off-putting things in private. Moreover, it is often difficult from the documents to know whether someone who was named in some email had any real connection.

The bottom line: It's hard to keep your eye on the ball when the juggler has so many of them.

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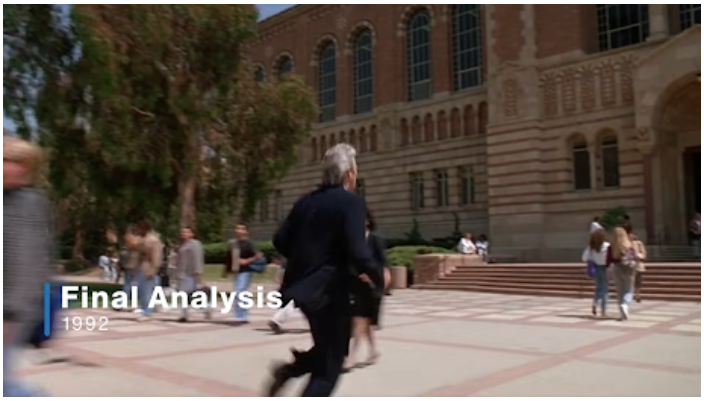
*https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/16/magazine/jeffrey-epstein-money-scams-investigation.html.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 8:55 AM No comments:

Labels: miscellaneous

Clips



The UCLA Alumni Association has put together clips from movies & TV filmed at UCLA:

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Or direct to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ke_392sjUUU.

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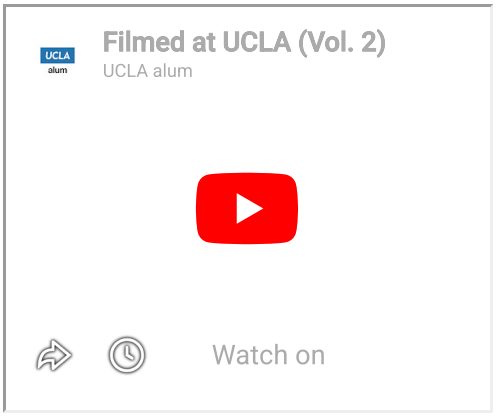

Or direct to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sO9tVbe3TVk.

Vol. 3:

Or direct to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EiOMxuhnw6o.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: miscellaneous, UCLA

Straws in the Wind - Part 244

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Contributors

- California Policy Issues
- Toby Higbie
- UCLA Faculty Association

From Inside Higher Ed: *Sociology faculty at Florida International University are outraged that their department is requiring them to use a state-approved textbook to teach an introductory course as part of the university's general education curriculum. They say the state's process for developing the textbook and new course framework was opaque, rushed and designed to pressure universities into adopting censored learning materials without a legal directive to do so.*

Furthermore, the textbook—a heavily edited version of an open-source sociology textbook titled Introduction to Sociology 3e—now makes only cursory mentions of important sociological concepts regarding race, gender, sexuality and other topics that have drawn Republican ire. Faculty say it whitewashes the field's key principles, diminishes the quality of education for students and intensifies the state's attacks on academic freedom. ...Compared to the original 669-page textbook, the new version is just 267 pages. Unlike the original, the state-approved version doesn't include chapters on media and technology, global inequality, race and ethnicity, social stratification, or gender, sex and sexuality...

Full story at https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/academic-freedom/2026/01/29/florida-introduces-sanitized-sociology-textbook.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:

Labels: diversity, Florida International U, politics

Will Harvard Continue to Lead the Charge? - Part 116

From the Harvard Crimson: *Harvard pushed to increase the course load of non-tenure-track faculty at a bargaining session last Friday, escalating tensions with the union's thousands of members as the negotiations drag into their second year. The proposal would permit the University to require lecturers and preceptors, who typically teach a maximum of four and five classes, to take on up to five or six class sections per year, respectively. The move marks Harvard's third attempt at upping the workload of non-tenure-track faculty.*

...The union rejected Harvard's offer all three times. Harvard Academic Workers-United Auto Workers, which represented more than 2,600 non-ladder faculty as of Wednesday, has been negotiating since September 2024 for their first contract... Friday's bargaining session marked the second time the union had resumed negotiating with the University since nearly 1,300

members demanded Harvard agree to a contract last November... Though a new maximum course load would not necessarily create more courses for non-tenure-track faculty, the union raised concerns that current financial constraints could give the University a "strong incentive" to up the status quo to five or six courses per year...

...Harvard offered to eliminate time caps on the condition that all current non-ladder faculty must reapply at the end of their current appointment for an uncapped position in a May counterproposal to the union. But the union refused to agree, citing a list of other restrictions the University sought to impose...

Full story at https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2026/1/28/time-caps-teaching-load/.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:10 AM No comments:

Labels: Harvard

Wednesday, February 4, 2026

Still Waiting for that New Master Plan

UC President Clark Kerr hands the Master Plan to Gov. Pat Brown

On the thought that maybe repetition is a Good Thing, we will keep pointing to evidence that there is a need for a new Master Plan process to create a new Master Plan for Higher Education. The facts underlying that need just keep piling up:

From CalMatters: *In the past two years, Gov. Gavin Newsom vetoed three bills that would have allowed community colleges to award students more bachelor's degrees. Unfazed, lawmakers are now backing a fourth bill that does much of the same. The measure, Assembly Bill 664, cleared its first legislative tests by passing the Assembly Jan. 26, potentially setting up another collision course between state lawmakers and the governor.*

While Newsom supports more bachelor's degrees for students, he's repeatedly stated his opposition to adding more community college baccalaureate programs that go outside an agreed-upon process in a law that he and lawmakers approved in 2021. That law said community colleges can develop up to 30 bachelor's degrees per academic year, as long as the degrees do not duplicate the baccalaureate programs of the University of California and California State University.

But since then, community colleges and Cal State have disagreed on what counts as duplication, resulting in more than a dozen stalled community college bachelor's programs because Cal State opposed them. Both public university systems oppose the latest bill. They fear more community colleges will seek their own degrees that duplicate what the universities offer, unraveling the 2021 law. The universities see themselves as the traditional generators of bachelor's degrees. Community colleges say the state is too big and spread out to limit public four-year degrees to just the Cal State and UC...

Full story at https://calmatters.org/education/higher-education/2026/01/community-colleges-california-2/.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: community colleges, CSU, Master Plan, politics, UC

Straws in the Wind - Part 243

From Inside Higher Ed: *The Department of Education is taking its next major step toward overhauling the college accreditation system, inviting higher ed policy experts to suggest nominees for an upcoming negotiating committee. But while the... announcement sheds more light on the Trump administration's priorities, it provides no concrete plan on how they intend to make those goals a reality. President Trump has long declared accreditation reform his "secret weapon," and the department had already signaled its desire for change.*

Now, the department turns its attention to rewriting the rules that govern accreditors—a process that will involve convening an advisory committee to provide input on the changes. That committee will discuss up to 10 topics outlined in the Federal Register notice, though much of the attention is expected to focus on making it easier for new accreditors to join the market, increasing the agencies' focus on data-driven student performance benchmarks, and scrubbing any existing diversity, equity and inclusion standards.

...Colleges have to be approved by a federally recognized accreditor in order to access federal student aid, and that gatekeeping role has led to more scrutiny on the agencies in recent years. So, while policy experts on both sides of the political aisle have long agreed that the accreditation system needs to improve, their views on how to make that happen differ.

...But accreditation policy experts, even those who support the idea in theory, say it's unclear how ED can rework the process given several bright lines outlined in statute about what it takes to become a government-approved accreditor. For example, accreditors must have operated for at least two years before gaining recognition. And while Kyle Beltramini, a senior research fellow at the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, fully supports the idea of making it easier for new accreditors to enter the market, he said the time requirement is something that cannot be changed without Congressional approval...

...Along with allowing new accreditors to enter the ecosystem, the Trump administration has also aimed to shut down the so-called "woke" standards of existing ones—particularly when it comes to the consideration of demographics like race, gender and sexuality. (Many of which have already been rolled back or made more flexible in response to the administration's political pressure.) But now... experts say the administration may also be looking to accomplish broader goals like boosting intellectual diversity and conservative representation among faculty. As is the case with introducing new accreditors, higher ed policy experts remain uncertain how the Trump administration intends to do so without violating the law...

Full story at
https://www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/accreditation/2026/01/27/education-dept-eyes-rewrite-accreditation-rules.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:

Labels: diversity, politics

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